



State of Connecticut  
Department of Higher Education

**Testimony by the Connecticut Department of Higher Education  
Before the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee  
11:00 a.m. – LOB 1E  
February 17, 2011**

**Senate Bill 916 (Raised) An Act Concerning Remediation**

The Department of Higher Education would like to express its support for this Committee's interest to address the challenge of developmental education for new college students in our state and provide an overview of work that is already underway by the state's P-20 Council, which relates to this issue specifically.

Briefly, the P-20 Council ("P" standing for preschool, and "20" representing through postsecondary and into the workforce) seeks to improve the coordination and collaboration of early childhood education, K-12 education, and postsecondary education, as well as workforce integration to increase educational attainment and workforce productivity in Connecticut. In fact, the Council asserts that Connecticut's future economic and societal success depends on this increased attainment. The Council is co-chaired by the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Commissioner of Education and includes a wide range of leaders from business, education, and philanthropy and community-based organizations. The Council is currently focused on issues related to educator effectiveness, building relationships between districts and local postsecondary institutions, and linking data systems from preschool through postsecondary and labor to provide information that informs policy and programming.

Over the past year, the data sub-committee of the Council has been working to gather information about the remedial needs of Connecticut public high school graduates, in addition to information on the postsecondary and workforce outcomes of our high school graduates back to the class of 2003. At the current time, Connecticut's public colleges and universities are unable to report to high schools how many students each high school is sending to college that need remediation, how many persist in their postsecondary studies, and how many graduate. We have heard from focus groups of school leaders, teachers and counselors that this information would be invaluable in helping them to understand the successes and shortfalls of our educational pathways in order to develop strategies for improvement. While the analysis of the student success data is still in progress, the Council plans to release high school level data back to districts when the work is completed later this year. The same focus groups urged that we take great care in releasing the data in order to promote a positive and collective approach to understanding the data in order to promote conversations that lead to plans for jointly addressing the challenges to student success between K-12 and postsecondary education.

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As we continue to move along this pathway of considering education as a P-20 continuum versus separate silos, it is important to recognize that the issue of student success is a shared responsibility that does not rest solely on the shoulders of any one system. To understand remediation and, more broadly, to impact student success, requires mutual understanding of the data, clear and consistent expectations of the system receiving the students, a willingness to engage in uncomfortable conversations, and commitment to work together for the betterment of our students. This is the foundation of the P-20 Council.

We look forward to a continuing dialogue on the details of this legislation.

#### **Senate Bill 927 (Raised) An Act Concerning Requirements for Early Childhood Educators**

The Department of Higher Education continues to be committed to implementing a competency-based early childhood teacher credential. These new qualifications reflect current research and national policies. We need teachers to be effective in early childhood classrooms. That being said, we support the changes and revisions in this bill. The Department supports the 50/50 proposals before you. We also stand ready to assist in any way to ultimately make certain that our young children are served by competent professionals in these critical early years.

#### **House Bill 928 (Raised) An Act Concerning Teacher Preparation**

The State Department of Education through its Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification requires that graduates of teacher preparation programs in the state demonstrate the competencies outlined by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). As a result, in Connecticut's public higher education institutions, schools of education and programs for teacher preparation are all accredited by NCATE. In conjunction with specific subject-area groups and associations, NCATE monitors and approves programs for content and graduate quality. These mechanisms, which are national in scope, have in general had the effect of aligning teacher preparation programs, as well as perhaps the side-effect of increasing the number of credits required for degrees leading to teaching certification. In effect, the quasi-national standards for reading instruction and subject matter instruction are set by these groups.

The Department would be happy to participate in a study about issues concerning alternate routes to certification in early childhood education, including the alternate route to certification program provided by Charter Oak State College. A number of recent policy changes and proposals suggest that the area of early childhood education may be in a state of flux, and it represents an area in which variety of areas and stakeholders have legitimate and complex policy concerns. The Department would be pleased to work with these stakeholders to study issues related to alternative routes to certification in early childhood education

**House Bill 6054 (Raised) An Act Concerning The Tracking of Unique Identifiers By Institutions of Higher Education**

The Department of Higher Education supports actions that increase the capability of both colleges and local school districts to understand the factors influencing the academic achievement and success of Connecticut's students as they continue their studies after graduating from high school. Using a unique identifier, which is already assigned by the Department of Education to public school students, is a very important tool to increase our knowledge about what drives student success.

Some of the intended outcomes of this bill have already been set into motion under the auspices of the P20 Council (a group of leaders from education, business, philanthropy and community-based organizations that seeks to improve coordination and collaboration across all levels of educational systems and workforce integration) to meet requirements under the federal legislation which created the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund. The need for and utility of incorporating a unique identifier from P-12 into higher education was discussed with research and central office staff of each public postsecondary unit, and each has agreed to incorporate the identifier into their post-secondary data systems. We also support including the independent institutions in this work. The Commissioner of Education issued a memorandum to public school districts in June 2010 to place a unique identifier called the State Assigned Student Identifier (SASID) onto student transcripts, and this process may benefit from having support from the legislature. We will be happy to discuss any legislative changes that need to be made to the current bill.

Understanding student experiences across educational boundaries is critical for shaping smart policies that will increase the academic achievement of students in Connecticut, so we look forward to continuing dialogue with you about this important legislation.